

Muscle Cells

(Read all 3 and choose 1 for chart)



Skeletal Muscles

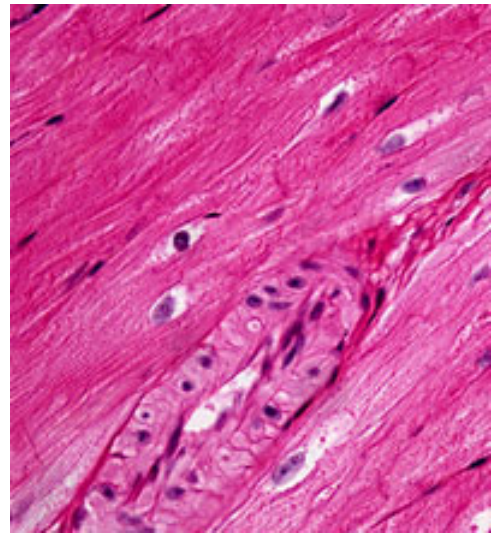
Skeletal muscles are usually attached to bones. They are often called striated muscles because of their striated, or striped appearance. The cells of skeletal muscles can be very long, sometimes over 30 cm, and can contain many different nuclei. Your brain usually tells your skeletal muscles what to do.

Skeletal muscles are mainly used in movement, such as when you wiggle your toes, wave your hand, and smile.

Smooth Muscles

Your body contains many muscles that are not under the control of your brain, but rather operate on their own without instructions. These muscles are called smooth muscles because they appear smoother than other muscles. Smooth muscles can be found throughout your body, including in your stomach, in your blood vessels, in your digestive system, and in your eyes. They are used to move food through your digestive system, regulate blood flow, and decrease the size of your pupils when there is too much light.

Smooth muscle cells are smaller than skeletal muscle cells and only have one nucleus. Also, unlike skeletal muscle cells, smooth muscle cells don't have striations, or stripes. Smooth muscle cells are connected directly to one another, allowing electrical pulses to pass through them.



Cardiac Muscles

Cardiac muscle is a special type of tissue that is only found within your heart. Did you know your heart is actually a very strong muscle? Like skeletal muscle cells, cardiac muscles cells are striated, or striped. Like smooth muscle cells, cardiac muscle cells are not under the control of your brain, but instead operate independently. Also like smooth muscle cells, the cells of your heart are connected directly to one another, allowing electrical pulses to flow through them.

